THIRD SECTION
TWELVE PAGES

The Sun.

"Meagher of the Sword"—"Respect Our Monroe Doctrine," Says Japanese
Real Estate—Financial—Poultry

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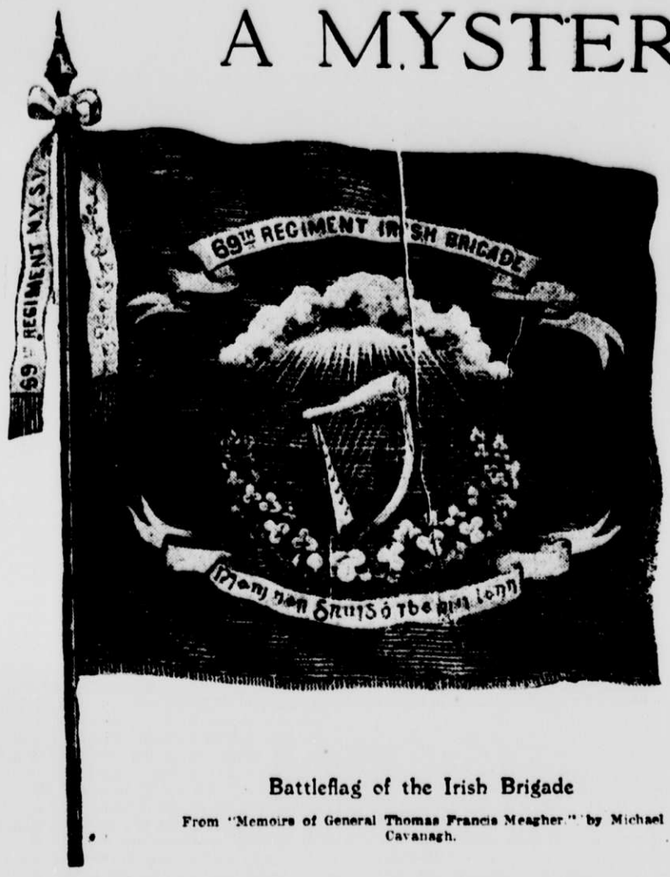
DEATH OF "MEAGHER OF THE SWORD" A MYSTERY OF FIFTY YEARS



Battleflag of the Irish Brigade

From "Memoirs of General Thomas Francis Meagher," by Michael Cavanagh.

Known Facts About the Disappearance of the Irish Patriot and Civil War General at Fort Benton in 1867—That He Was Murdered a Possibility, Though the Recent Account of His Lynching by Vigilantes Is Contradicted by the Evidence Available

Gen. Thomas Francis Meagher

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MYSTERY has hung over the death of Gen. Thomas Francis Meagher for nearly half a century. Secretary and acting Governor of the infant Territory of Montana, gallant soldier who had led the Irish Brigade through the bloodiest battles of the civil war with commanding bravery at Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville; superb orator of the fine old ornate kind, standing well up beside the best of them; Irish patriot of the Young Ireland militant type of 1848 who did not shrink from prison or the gallows when he fell under the ban of English law, taking his place on the convict ship (in his case a brig of war) as cheerfully as he would at a yachting party; suffering for three years the miseries of a ticket of leave man in the wilderness of Tasmania, escaping dramatically as did John Boyle O'Reilly a quarter of a century later and landing in New York to be hailed as a leader with wild acclaim by his delighted fellow countrymen—here was an engaging romantic figure, gifted, brilliant, fitted for the finer civilization, energetically assuming the government of perhaps the richest piece of territory in the world with a sparse population of rough and tumble gold seekers, cattlemen, horse thieves, gamblers, traders and fighting Indian tribes.

He was in his forty-fourth year, with every promise in life before him, when all at once he disappeared from human sight from an old river steamboat tied up at Fort Benton on the upper reaches of the Missouri River on the night of July 1, 1867. From such reports and inquiries as were made at the time it seemed simple enough. He had stumbled when alone off the upper deck where it was unprotected by guards and had drowned with a long piercing cry heard from the darkness in the river that was sweeping by with a flow of nine or ten miles an hour. He was never seen again. Many constructions were put upon that stumble and fall, some uncharitable but happily false. In the general acceptance it was labelled accident, misadventure, fatality, but until a couple of weeks ago no one hinted of crime in connection with the dire event.

In the rough, primitive community of Montana—probably not one white inhabitant for every seven square miles of its 146,800—many discordant elements existed. The floating population, mostly miners and cattlemen, were frankly lawless. Opposing them were the traders and mine and cattle owners, who had formed an organization of Vigilantes before the Territory was created in 1864. Every man carried a revolver, many two. Set against these and all civilization were the Indian hostiles as numerous nearly as the whites—among them the great Sioux tribes that fought Crook to a standstill and annihilated Custer's column in 1876 in the battle of the Little Big Horn.

Then the close of the civil war brought an aftermath of bitter politics hard to conceive to-day. It was not at all like the politics that kept Montana in turmoil during the long, deadly struggle of the '80s between Marcus Daly and William A. Clark, but was a force thing of faith only in those who held with the North or the South through the war. Meagher, appointed by Andrew Johnson in October, 1865, came as an acknowledged war Democrat to Montana. The fires of "reconstruction" blazed angrily even there among the sequestered mountains. Meagher, it was sourly noted, did not hesitate to make friends with Southerners. He did not please the Vigilantes—a gentry without particular magnanimity, acting in the dark, whose spurts of rough homicidal justice were freely interspersed with political vengeance and the darker murders of personal hate. They had the habit of writing grim, threatening letters of the kind that survive in the Black Hand of to-day among the Italians.

Meagher met all the opposition that developed cheerfully or coolly. He was no tenderfoot, with his years of campaigning in Virginia behind him. He was a soldier, but no assassin, and scorned all the base ways of killing, yet evidence develops now that he was aware of his enemies and their truculence, as will be seen later.

At any rate he was most concerned in the early summer of 1867 with the Indian difficulty, the growing audacity of the Piegan incursions on white settlements, the insolence of the Sioux along the Missouri River and widely separated Indian ambushes and night attacks all over the territory. The roads were unsafe. He started to raise a regiment of militia and did not find it difficult to enlist enough men. Helena, the capital, near the Great Falls of the Missouri, was his official residence, and there he lived with his young wife, who had been a Miss Townsend of New York and who was a handsome, cultivated lady. He had arranged for a supply of arms and munitions for his regiment and expected they would be sent up the river to Fort Benton, the head of navigation.

Accordingly he started from Helena to examine the military stores and superintend their forwarding—a matter of great importance. On his way to Fort Benton he was halted at Sun River by an attack of dysentery entailing a delay of six days. The weather was extremely hot, and he suffered a good deal from want of medical care. When he improved he pushed forward on horseback for the last thirty miles of the journey and arrived at the miserable settlement fatigued, weak and in pain.

He was not a man to repine, but he was disappointed to find the rifles he was seeking were at a fort 120 miles further down the river. He went to the trading post to rest. So far all the accounts agree. Meagher's habits were at times convivial after the manner of the army and the frontier, but on that afternoon no one has raised the question of his having exceeded, and the evidence is direct as to his abstinence. He left his escort and companions and entered the store. There he sat some time. That night he died.

Here we must note the new murder stories. About ten days ago a man rejoicing in the fine frontier names of Pat Millar, alias Frank Diamond, "allowing" that he was about to die, "confessed" that Gen. Meagher did not die by accident, but that he, at the instigation of the Vigilants, had stolen at night on board the old steamboat, had murdered Gen. Meagher and thrown his body into the river, then plunged in himself and swam ashore, for all of which he had received $8,000 from Alexander Potter, whoever he may have been. But Pat Millar, alias Frank Diamond, did not die; and now he recants and says it was all a dream. Was it?

No sooner, however, does Pat, alias Frank, recover, than David M. Billingsley of Butte, formerly a Vigilant, who is also known as Dave Mack—doubtless a pleasing contraction of the first two of his formidable names—avers that Meagher was kidnapped from the river boat and hanged by members of that organization, the body secretly buried and the secret kept in its grave up to the time of his telling. Certainly the story is untrue in its details. Old frontiersmen vary their narratives of things forty-six years back. They mix one murder with another, and otherwise depart from truth; what residuum of crime, foul and dastardly, may be in his story may yet be unravelled.

Now, while the commonly accepted story has been told in outline above, let us get at what authentic detail we may. In 1870 Capt. William F. Lyons, who also had served bravely in the Irish brigade with Meagher and then was a member of the editorial staff of the New York *Herald*, a gentle, lovable man, published his "Life of Brigadier-General Meagher," telling sketchily the story of his soldier friend, and filling it out with many of his salient speeches. In the body of the book the accepted story is told of Meagher's death, but in the appendix appears a letter from the pilot of the river boat which varies the narrative importantly. He had heard that Capt. Lyons was seeking material for the "life," and so he put pen to paper, incidentally giving an unconscious picture of himself, which enables us to see him as a brawny, genial, good hearted man of the grave exterior of river pilots in general. He was John T. Doran of 404 North Fourth street, St. Louis, Mo., and he writes under date of December 16, 1869—two and a half years only after the event which must have seared itself into his mind.

"I will endeavor," he says, "to communicate without elaboration the circumstances of Gen. Meagher's death, believing that I am conversant with all the facts, as I was with him constantly on the day of the sad occurrence, and was the last man that spoke to him on earth."

He relates how in the spring of 1866 he was pilot on the steamer Ontario, bound for Fort Benton, and had the opportunity of showing some courtesy to Mrs. Meagher, who was "on her way to join her husband in the mountain country." The General had shown his appreciation of this in many ways. He continues:

"The following year I became pilot of the steamer G. A. Thompson, which left St. Louis in the early part of April and arrived at Fort Benton June 29, 1867. On our arrival in port we found there the steamers Guidon and Amelia Poe, about a hundred yards apart from each other, and we anchored between the two, about an equal distance from each. Shortly after landing I went up to the upper boat (Amelia Poe) and while fishing from her lower deck I saw a troop of about twelve horsemen riding into town. I afterward discovered that they were Gen. Meagher and his staff. Wearying soon of the piscatorial sport I went to the provision store of J. G. Baker, and in the back room of the establishment I discovered Gen. Meagher reading a paper. Looking up and immediately recognizing me, he greeted me most warmly, and both seating ourselves we engaged in a long conversation.

"He informed me that on his road into Benton he was very sick for six days—that the object of his visit was to procure arms and equipments for a regiment he had already raised to fight against the Indians, and learning that the required articles were not there but at Camp Cook, 120 miles below, he expressed his determination to proceed to the aforesaid place the next day. He also spoke in the most tender and affectionate terms of his wife, residing at Helena, saying that in their mountain home they were as happy as two thrushes in a bush. Finally dinner time coming on, and learning that he was stopping at no particular place, I invited him down to the boat to dine, an invitation which he accepted.

"After dinner we walked through the town, and meeting numerous friends we were invited on several occasions to partake of the hospitalities always urgently extended to strangers in this section of the country, and in each instance the General politely but firmly refused to accede to their request, saying that his experience at Sun River had given him a distaste for such amusement. Thus, in walking and talking, we spent the afternoon, and toward evening wended our way to the boat (Thompson) to take tea.

"The sun had just begun to go down as we took our chairs out on the guards of the boat, and as the weather was very pleasant we lit our cigars and commenced reading. I lent the General a book I had brought from the States; it was 'The Collegians,' by Gerald Griffin. He seemed to peruse it with great attention for half an hour, when suddenly closing it he turned to me, and said very excitedly, 'Johnny, they threaten my life in that town!' As I passed I heard some men say 'There he goes.'

"I endeavored to persuade him that his fears were utterly groundless, as indeed they were, for there was not one man in the Territory who did not love him. He then asked me if I was armed, and on my assuring him that I was he desired to see my pistols. I immediately produced my two navy revolvers (every one is armed in that country), and he, seeing that they were capped and loaded, handed them back to me.* Perceiving that he was wearied and nervous, I persuaded him to retire to his berth. By this time it was pitch dark, the hour being about half past 9. He begged me not to leave him; but on my assuring him that it would only be for a few moments, and I would return and occupy the upper berth, he retired.

"I fixed the clothes about him, locked the door of the stateroom and went down on the lower deck. Now the lock on the door leading into the cabin was very defective, but I did not mind it much, as I intended to return without delay. I had been on the lower deck but a short time when I heard a splash in the dark waters below, immediately followed by the cry of 'Man overboard!' I rushed toward the water, and the engineer saluted me with 'Johnny, it's your friend.'

"To have jumped in would not only have been useless but almost certain death, as the river there was about twelve feet deep and with a current rushing at the rate of nine miles an hour; and, furthermore it was so dark that no object could be discerned.

"Accompanied by several others I ran down on the shore toward the Guidon, which lay fifty yards below, in the meantime hearing two agonizing cries from the man, the first one very short, the last prolonged and of the most heartrending description. We rushed into the wheel of the steamer and lowered ourselves hip deep in the water, clinging with our hands to the wheel, while others threw out ropes and boards, but all of no avail. The next day cannons were fired, the river dragged and the shores and islands searched, but all to no purpose.

"The river below is dotted with innumerable small islands of different and various areas, the activity of hostile Indians preventing us from exploring the ones furthest down; and no doubt the body of the gallant but unfortunate General was washed ashore on one of them, but though I wrote descriptive letters to all the forts below I never heard any tidings of it."

From another and later life of General Meagher, by Michael Cavanagh of Washington, D. C. (a former official of Fenian times in New York), published at Worcester, Mass., in 1892, comes another circumstantial story worthy of note. It is in the form of a paper by Capt. Patrick W. Condon of Fenian fame, and recites an experience a year after Meagher's death. In the fall of 1868 Capt. Condon went to take charge of the stonework construction for the bridge over the Missouri at Omaha. There he made the acquaintance of the soldier who had been a sentry aboard the old steamboat from which Gen. Meagher went to his death. Unfortunately the soldier's name is not given. The account says:

"The plain facts are these: Gen. Meagher had been ailing for some three days with a severe attack of summer complaint. He struggled to the log-house trading post, where he was accommodated with a seat in a back room by the proprietor. He remained here for several hours resting his head on his hands placed on a small table in front of him * * * The proprietor, learning his distress, urged him to take the only remedy in his power to offer, a glass of blackberry wine. This was repeated three times during his long and weakening agony at the trading post, after which toward nightfall he was conducted to the boat and retired to his stateroom, or rather the pilot's stateroom, which was kindly given up to him.

"The sentry's account (sworn to) was substantially as follows: 'While on duty during the night pacing the deck I heard a noise sternward. On looking in that direction I saw somebody moving in white clothing (under clothes) toward the left rear of the stern, where I knew the temporary accommodation place of the vessel was. Of course I about-faced and marched the other way * * * and repacing my round about midway I heard a shout, then a splash—that was all. I shouted "Man overboard!" In a moment the deck was alive; floating life buoys were flung out—boats and lights on the water. The recent Indian depredations had caused us to be fully on the alert and prepared for anything sudden; but all to no purpose.'"

In collecting these accounts one item should be added from Capt. Lyons's book.

"Tired as he was, he undertook to write to some friends before retiring, one of whom at least, Richard O'Gorman, received the epistle addressed to him."

Here then we have in three accounts from different sources the story of that last day of Meagher's on earth. Pilot Doran's is the best in its continuity, and he scouts the idea of enemies of Gen Meagher, but note the significance of the italicized sentences in the letter. The presence of the soldier on sentry duty, the clear narrative of his giving the alarm, the pilot's hearing the cry of "man overboard," the vain rush to help all stamp as untrue the story of Dave Mack with its kidnapping and hanging, but was it impossible that Diamond or some other had secreted himself and actually seized the General unawares as he came from the cabin and hurled him overboard? Little need for murdering in advance a man who could be cast in the blackness of night into the Missouri as it races past Fort Benton. If murder was done, it was done suddenly, and the murderer in the confusion that immediately followed might well have mingled with the crowd and walked ashore. It is most unlikely that he followed his victim into the river and lived to swim out.

Yet Pilot Doran's statement of Meagher's belief in his danger has a certain element of corroboration of the story of murder, and those who seek truth, and those who honor the memory of "Meagher of the Sword" should follow up the clues given by these confessors of murder, whether done in person or by deputy.

In reviewing this pitiful story of Meagher's end let us look at this man a little more closely. He was born in the city of Waterford, Ireland, on August 3, 1823, of well to do parents. His father's family had been noted in Munster for hundreds of years, the parent stem existing in Tipperary. His mother died in his childhood, but her unmarried sister cared for the boy and began his education. At 10 the motherless boy was sent to the Jesuits' celebrated academy at Clongowes Wood in Kildare, where save for the midsummer holidays he remained until he was 16. Even then he was the orator in embryo. Next he was sent to the Jesuits' College, Stoneyhurst, in Lancashire, England, where he remained four years, till his graduation, distinguishing himself in the classics and composition and taking prizes in rhetoric.

He was no "grind," was up to all the fun of the college and acquired unconsciously the English accent and formal mode of speech which ever after characterized his utterance, and which so often astounded his hearers when giving voice to the most un-English sentiments. The humor of it was that young Meagher all his life afterward believed that he spoke with a pronounced Munster brogue. In 1843 he returned to Waterford to find his father Mayor of the city, the first Catholic to hold such office in Ireland.

It was a question what business or profession he would follow, but he does not seem to have been hurried to make a selection. He travelled through Ireland and on the Continent. Daniel O'Connell's monster meetings calling for the repeal of the act of union with England and clamoring for the reestablishment of the Irish Parliament in Dublin were taking place, and young Meagher was soon enlisted for the cause. It was at one of these repeal meetings that he made his first public speech, and at its close it was the "Liberator" himself, the "uncrowned King" of Ireland, who patted him on the shoulder, and said: "Well done, Young Ireland." Bitterly years after was O'Connell to hear that phrase among those who at last rejected his constitutional methods and preached open rebellion to the power that hearkened to nothing else.

The leaders of Young Ireland were a brilliant group. Thomas Davis, their statesman, seer, prophet and poet, was head and shoulders above his contemporaries. Charles Gavan Duffy and William Smith O'Brien, the former editor of the *Nation*, a really powerful paper, the latter a solid gentleman and member of the English Parliament, were the next in order of genius. To this party young Meagher attached himself passionately. Davis died untimely, and Meagher's eulogy was remarkable for its force, grace and feeling.

Then came O'Connell's dark days. His meetings were forbidden. He was even arrested and put on trial, but though the populace still cheered his valiant fight in the courts, the young men of Ireland were deserting him. His heart was broken. The enthusiasm of the Young Irelanders grew apace. It had been O'Connell's latest utterance—strange food for Irish consumption—that "the freedom of Ireland was not worth the shedding of one drop of blood." And it was upon this theme that Meagher on July 28, 1846, arose in Conciliation Hall and delivered the speech that he never surpassed in defence of striking with force and weapons for liberty. Hearken to a few periods from this man of 23 years:

"Abhor the sword—stigmatize the sword? No; for in the passes of the Tyrol it cut to pieces the banner of the Bavarian, and through those cragged passes, struck a path to fame for the peasant insurrectionist of Innspruck!

"Abhor the sword—stigmatize the sword? No; for at its blow a giant nation started from the waters of the Atlantic and by its redeeming magic and in the quivering of its crimson light the crippled colony sprang into the attitude of a proud republic—prosperous, limitless, invincible!

"Abhor the sword—stigmatize the sword? No, for it swept the Dutch marauders out of the fine old towns of Belgium—scourged them back to their own phlegmatic swamps—and knocked their flag and sceptre, their laws and bayonets into the sluggish waters of the Scheldt.

"I learned that it was the right of a nation to govern herself—not in this hall, but upon the ramparts of Antwerp. This, the first article of a nation's creed, I learned upon those ramparts, where freedom was justly estimated and the possession of the precious gift was purchased by the effusion of generous blood."

Ireland drifted to a futile rebellion. The leaders were arrested and condemned, some to the gallows, some to penal servitude, but none were executed. John Mitchel's arrest preceded the others. Meagher, as has been told above, was sent to Tasmania in 1849, whence he escaped in 1852, and the miseries of Ireland from fever and famine and eviction went on as before, until of her 8,000,000 population in 1846 scarcely more than 4,000,000 remained in a few years.

Meagher received a tremendous welcome when he arrived in New York and his oratory fairly glowed with praise of America and love of her liberty and laws. He lectured, he wrote for the Irish papers; he went to Costa Rica on a mission from *Harper's*; he was admitted to the Bar; he started a paper of his own, but although it proved profitable he gave it up for further lecturing and roving commissions as a correspondent. In 1856 he married Miss Townsend.

The war for the Union was approaching. Meagher had acted with the Democracy from his first coming, but when Sumter was fired on and Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 men, "Meagher of the Sword" declared for the Union. At a meeting held at that heated time he said:

"The republic that gave us an asylum and an honorable career, which is the mainstay of human freedom the world over, is threatened with disruption. It is the duty of every liberty loving citizen to prevent such a calamity at all hazards. Above all it is the duty of us Irish citizens who aspire to establish a similar form of government in our native land."

Meagher immediately raised a company of Zouaves which joined the Sixty-ninth Regiment, choosing him for captain. He went to the front with

Continued on Second Page.

In Close Quarters at Chancellorsville

From "Memoirs of General Thomas Francis Meagher," by Michael Cavanagh.

*During his conflict with the politicians Meagher had been frequently threatened.—Capt. Lyons's note.